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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 7 July 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GALUSKA (Czech Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (agenda item 3) (continued):

(b) FOLLOW-UP TO POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (E/1997/65 and Add. 1-4, E/1997/89)

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Chief, Operational Activities for Development Unit) said that operational activities for development were in a state of transformation. Efforts in the United Nations system were under way to strengthen the resident coordinator system, support the country strategy note process and improve guidelines for the programme approach and national execution. Measured against the work plan for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120, most of the benchmarks established for early 1997 had been reached.

On the subject of capacity building, new concepts were taking shape within the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), and the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/65) provided information on the evaluation of the impact of operational activities for development which the General Assembly had requested in resolution 50/120. The report contained a number of substantive recommendations. In one of them, the Council was invited to reaffirm that the subject of capacity building should be an important element of the triennial policy review scheduled for 1998. Other recommendations dealt with: (1) the need better to integrate external assistance in order to strengthen national capacity in monitoring and evaluation; (2) the need to develop system-wide guidelines and criteria to further the recommendations contained in paragraph 26 of resolution 50/120 and to focus on capacity strengthening in policy and programme formulation, development management, planning and implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation; (3) new requirements and the consequent need to introduce fundamental changes in the way operational activities were conceived and carried out; (4) the need to review current policies and procedures to meet the new requirements of recipient countries; and (5) the need to achieve greater clarity and understanding, and coordination, of capacity building by the system, particularly at the country level.

Progress on country-level coordination was assessed in addendum 2 of the Secretary-General's report, and recommendations were made on the further

implementation of resolution 50/120 (E/1997/65). They included strengthening the responsibility of resident coordinators in the planning and coordination of programmes; improving the functioning of field committees for programme and project review; adjusting the staffing of country offices to reflect the changing requirements for substantive programme work, including in thematic groups; achieving early sharing of programme and project ideas with resident coordinators; increasing the timeliness and quality of support to resident coordinators; furthering common premises and shared services at the country level and making further progress in joint monitoring and evaluation, in particular by establishing baseline data for major programmes and strengthening national capacity.

As the exchange with the executive heads of United Nations funds and programmes had shown, country-level coordination of United Nations funds and programmes was receiving special attention by the Executive Committee on Development Operations. At the Administrative Committee on Coordination level, a working group would shortly be meeting to review new guidelines on the resident coordinator system and related programming and administrative areas, in the light of country-level experience.

As the present session was the last Council session before the Secretariat began preparing the 1998 triennial policy review, the Council might wish to identify areas requiring particular attention.

Referring to the note by the Secretary-General on policy issues arising from the reports of the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes (E/1997/89), he noted that the Council had requested that issues requiring policy guidance should be brought to its attention. As that had not occurred either in 1996 or in 1997, members might wish to address the reasons for that situation.

Annex I to the Secretary-General's note identified a large number of programmes approved over the past year, but there was no indication that the country strategy note, where available, had been referred to by the Boards. The Council might wish to recommend that the Boards should express their views on the subject and might wish to prepare guidelines for ensuring that country strategy notes were used as a common frame of reference for country programmes.

Follow-up to United Nations conferences had been a major item before the Boards in the past year: the Council might wish to receive information from the Boards on how that item was considered and also ensure appropriate coordination. The issue of resources had also received the Boards' attention, and the Council might like to take into account the decisions and reports listed in paragraph 14 of the note in formulating its recommendations to the General Assembly.

With regard to regional-level coordination the proposed testing of a strategy note would be done at the subregional level and would be carried out in closest coordination with the regional commission concerned.

Mr. AHMED (United Nations Development Programme) said that over the past four decades, capacity building in programme countries had been UNDP's primary mission. In recent years UNDP had tightened its focus to capacity-development for poverty eradication through sustainable human development. It no longer viewed capacity development from a purely institutional point of view: capacity development must involve society as a whole, the public sector, civil society and the private sector.

Capacity development involved five factors: the establishment of an enabling environment for economic and social development; the public sector institutional context; the task network; the organizations themselves within that network, in other words, their sense of mission and administrative structures; and most importantly, human resources. No single project could address all five dimensions, which was why the programme approach was so essential for successful development of national capacity. It was important for United Nations bodies to arrive at a common understanding of capacity development, and the Council might recommend that efforts continue towards that goal.

Regarding field and regional coordination, the Secretary-General's recommendations were based on the actual reports of resident coordinators for 1996. Of particular importance were thematic groups, which, with different lead agencies depending on the subject covered, guided the substantive work of the resident coordinator system and enhanced the commitment of all members of the country team to the system.

Mrs. TRONE (United Nations Population Fund) said that UNFPA had participated actively in all ACC actions to facilitate coherent and coordinated implementation of the programmes of action of recent international conferences. It had also taken part in the formulation of measures to strengthen the resident coordinator system and the field committees, and efforts within the Joint Consultative Group on Policy to facilitate a commonly agreed United Nations development assistance framework.

As far as resources for operational activities for development were concerned, it was of overriding importance for UNFPA to attain the level of resources agreed by Governments at the International Conference on Population and Development at Cairo in 1994.

On the eve of the triennial policy review, the Council might address the matter of whether Governments had sufficient capacity for national execution, how best to develop such capacity in the shortest possible time and the most effective use of limited resources. Hasty capacity building would only burden the field offices without improving the use of resources. United Nations development assistance should contribute to capacity building rather than simply finance activities which could be sustained only with external funding. UNFPA, in that context, was undertaking a study of absorptive capacities and reviewing its monitoring mechanisms. It was also committed to decentralizing financial decisions. Furthermore, it was working to simplify its guidelines, procedures and processes and was engaged in comprehensive updating of its procedures manual. UNFPA's efforts to build partnerships in programme countries were not restricted to Governments, but also included NGOs, and coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral donors was improving.

Steps had been taken to initiate a mid-term review of the ICPD Programme of Action in 1999.

Mr. MEYER (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Union, said that the Union welcomed the Secretary-General's report despite the fact that its recommendations were somewhat uneven. The Union was also pleased to note that the Executive Committee for Development Operations had already decided on the first measures to be taken to implement

the recommendations, and it awaited with interest the Secretary-General's Track II reforms, which would not fail to affect the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/120 and the forthcoming triennial review of operational activities for development.

With regard to the coordination of activities at the country level, the European Union reaffirmed its commitment to the idea that the resident coordinator should be the representative in the field for the entire United Nations system. It was appropriate that UNDP had decided to assign a substantial share of its basic resources to the work of the resident coordinators and that other funds and programmes had taken specific steps to support the resident coordinator system. Resident coordinators should be chosen from the widest possible pool of candidates, under an open and transparent procedure.

The European Union was also committed to the principle of common premises and shared services for funds and programmes and looked forward to the assessment of results to be presented at the 1998 triennial review.

The Union attached great importance to the country strategy notes, which were prepared at the initiative of the recipient countries, and it noted with satisfaction that more and more countries were submitting them. The idea of conducting common country assessments appeared to be a sound one, and it would be useful to know the timetable for implementing the new procedure. The common United Nations development assistance framework should supplement country stratgegy notes and common country assessments, but it was necessary to know the budgetary implications of the new procedure. The specialized agencies should be involved in the process from the outset.

It would be interesting to know what effect the programme approach would have on the establishment of common databases. The European Union was in favour of programme and project ideas being immediately communicated to the resident coordinator in order to facilitate coordinated programming within an agreed framework.

The funds and programmes should be represented on the field coordination committees and thematic groups by competent and receptive individuals, and should involve those committees in the reviews of their activities. The European Union endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation 10 to that effect.

In monitoring and assessment matters, the United Nations system should take a more coordinated and integrated approach both in the field and at the headquarters, and the conditions for conducting common assessments should be established as soon as possible. An interim progress report should be submitted to the Council in 1998.

The European Union attached great importance to the current evaluation of operational activities for development, as it was conducting a similar evaluation of its own cooperation instruments. Excellent work had already been accomplished with scanty resources, and the undertaking deserved active support by the Member States.

As for regional capacity strengthening, the European Union would have preferred to be better informed of the interaction among the various organizations of the United Nations system. It was regrettable that the specific proposals announced to improve coordination at the regional level had not materialized. More generally, capacity strengthening at the regional level, which was a key element of sustainable development, was essential in all aspects of development management: coordination of assistance, policy formulation and capacity for assessing the contributions of the United Nations system and of national implementing structures. It now appeared that the design and implementation of those activities should be oriented differently. Unfortunately, the Secretary-General proposed no improvements in his report. In particular, the European Union would have liked to know the status of the new guidelines on national implementation.

Mr. BRESLER (United States of America) agreed that more attention should be paid to capacity building and endorsed the comments and recommendations in the Secretary-General's report. Before a specific plan of action was proposed, however, efforts should focus on learning more about the contents and modalities of institutional capacity building, taking account, in particular, of the important work done by the World Bank in that area. That would also make it easier to determine the areas in which capacity building was a priority.

He believed in reaching beyond traditional donors to increase core resources, following the experience of UNICEF. Developing countries should play a greater role in resource mobilization. Non-core resources, mobilized

with the agreement of the host Government and in accordance with its development priorities, could effectively supplement core resources without detracting from the neutrality of United Nations agencies.

To strengthen coordination in the field, development agencies should harmonize budgeting, programming and priority-setting and arrange for common premises where that was cost-effective. Common country assessments and development assistance frameworks must lay the foundation for programme coherence in the field. The relationship between country strategy notes and the newly-proposed assistance frameworks, however, needed to be clarified.

It was essential to strengthen the resident coordinator system while maintaining independent access to the host Government and programme accountability of the individual agencies.

Much confusion and misunderstanding surrounded national execution, which should be treated in a separate report. Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) was an effective means for countries to take responsibility for themselves, provided it was not dependent on the donors' wishes. The developing countries should establish national policies and support structures to make full use of TCDC. Most United States bilateral aid programmes stressed both that aspect and the need for recipient countries to maintain control over TCDC projects.

Mrs. SHAM POO (Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF) said that UNICEF was deeply committed to the process of United Nations reform. Even before Track I, UNICEF had developed a Mission Statement and Guiding Principles for its staff, clarified accountabilities between Headquarters and country and regional offices, streamlined oversight of programmes, begun using the United Nations Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), created a new internal management culture and improved budgetary and administrative procedures.

Since the Track I announcement, UNICEF had accomplished important work in chairing two of the sub-groups of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, which had been transformed into working groups to support the newly-established Executive Committee on Development Operations. The concept of United Nations Development Assistance Framework had taken shape through the efforts of the Sub-group on Policy Harmonization. The UNDAF, developed together with the country strategy note where it existed, would provide a

comprehensive programming instrument for the activities of the funds and programmes. It would be developed under the overall direction of the resident coordinator, whose role would thereby be strengthened. The experience of developing the common country assessment in Ghana, using a similar approach, had been highly successful.

The work of the sub-group leading the accelerated drive for common premises continued to advance. Many of the locations where UNICEF was not occupying shared premises were in countries in which the Government provided accommodation to UNICEF at no cost. In those countries UNICEF would prefer that the Government provided common premises on the same basis.

Other changes were being planned on the basis of the frameworks and procedures already in place. A proposal would be made to the Executive Board to establish a series of inter-sessional briefings to update members. UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF might hold joint briefings to keep delegations informed of progress on the harmonization of budget formats.

National capacity building and execution, through government and other national partners, had long been cornerstones of UNICEF's cooperation programmes, which were aimed at empowering those concerned to take control of the provision of basic social services. UNICEF had played an active role in CCPOQ's development of guidelines for national execution.

Another priority area was monitoring and evaluation. JCGP's Common Guidelines on Monitoring and Evaluation were beginning to bear fruit, in particular through the creation of system-wide databases through the common country assessment process. UNICEF was about to release an updated CD-ROM containing information on UNICEF evaluations and studies from 1987 to the present.

Realization of the full benefits of reform required sustained and predictable funding. UNICEF had noted with concern the recent trend towards increased growth of supplementary funds relative to general resources and increasing conditionalities. It was relying more heavily than ever on resource mobilization from the private sector, particularly through the national committees now operating in almost 40 countries; such contributions had represented more than $300 million, or one third of total contributions, in 1996.

Mrs. BERGERON (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia, said that capacity building must be seen as both a means and an end. Policy and operational changes must be made if the United Nations system was to inspire the cooperation agencies to take a more comprehensive and, at the same time, better-targeted approach to capacity building.

Progress in field and regional coordination was still quite fragmented. Efforts had been made to harmonize budget presentations, but there was still much work to be done. The role currently played by the resident coordinator in following up United Nations global conferences was truly disappointing, as was the lack of progress in establishing system-wide programming mechanisms. The same was true of the establishment and functioning of field-level committees and thematic groups. Further refinement and enhancement of the resident coordinator system was needed, with the participation of all funds and programmes in the system. Greater collaboration was required with the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly at the field level. Efforts should aim at establishing common premises and shared services wherever savings could be made. She looked forward to the results of the evaluation to be undertaken in 1997.

There was a direct link between national execution and capacity building, both of which should be part of a global strategy.

The next triennial policy review should give full consideration to the trend towards regional development activities and should consider the operational impact of greater decentralization. There should also be a clear link between United Nations development activities at the regional, subregional and national levels.

Without adequate core resources, organizations could not conduct their operational activities properly. Despite what was implied in recommendation 3 of the report, the fact that poverty elimination and capacity building were the key objectives of development cooperation would not necessarily help to increase core resources. Effective delivery in priority sectors should be a key part of a strategy to increase core funding. Better publicizing of the United Nations development system's success stories and best practices would also be a good way of mobilizing extra resources.

There was a clear need, at the country level, for a global strategy aimed at ensuring programme cohesiveness and coordination and making the best

use of the United Nations system's technical assistance capacity. The measures proposed by the Secretary-General in March would contribute to that goal if fully and rapidly implemented by all components of the system. The new proposals to be announced should make it possible to complete the reform process.

Mrs. HAGA (Observer for Norway) said that operational activities must by definition have an impact at country level. Any changes in the United Nations development system should be measured in terms of how they improved impact. Norway was therefore pleased that the resident coordinator system generally seemed to be functioning better than ever. However, existing legislation on the resident coordinator system was not very clear and resident coordinators did not have sufficient authority: increased formal authority was required. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework could not become an efficient tool for bringing the system together unless resident coordinators were given expanded powers.

The UNDAF was to enable individual agencies to develop programmes on a complementary basis. Norway's ambition for programmatic integration, however, was considerably higher. In addition, coordination of activities at the country level would have to be reflected at the headquarters level: measures to improve headquarters coordination should be an obvious Track I follow-up.

Common premises and shared services should be pursued where they would yield efficiency gains and would be cost-effective. Such goals were difficult to measure, however, and a narrow dollar-and-cent approach should be avoided.

Mr. SHAOFU (China) said that the Secretary-General's report provided sound material for consideration in preparation for the next triennial policy review. Capacity-building efforts must meet the developing countries' immediate needs and, in the longer term, give them the means to take responsibility for their economic development. Both goals were equally important. It was clear that in a time of globalization, developing countries were facing special difficulties in becoming integrated into the global economy. There had been 48 least developed countries in 1996, compared with 24 in 1970. In view of that situation, the agencies responsible for operational activities should focus on providing the developing countries with the analytical tools they needed to determine which external factors were hindering their economic development and prepare strategies to overcome those problems. The report, however, said nothing of that aspect of capacity building, which was a regrettable omission.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines) said that the United Nations system could increase the effectiveness of its operational activities only with adequate funding. He therefore welcomed the statements of a number of donor countries of their intention to increase their financial support for development cooperation. There was also a need for the funds and programmes to be reviewed periodically to ensure their responsiveness to the needs of recipient countries. Progress towards common premises should be encouraged, to the extent possible, especially when they were provided free of charge by the host country.

The resident coordinator system was the cornerstone of the development cooperation apparatus. Country strategy notes, field committees and thematic groups should emphasize the resident coordinator's team leader role; all those mechanisms should be fully utilized. Strengthening of the resident coordinator system should proceed in accordance with the following measures: resident coordinators should have a distinct job description; they should have the support of a sufficiently large technical and administrative staff and be given adequate resources; the pool for the selection of resident coordinators should be widened, with the programme countries involved being consulted in the appointment, and a performance appraisal of the resident coordinator system should be carried out periodically by the Council. The members of the United Nations development system, including the IMF and the World Bank, should work closely with the resident coordinator.

Countries that wished to prepared country strategy notes should be encouraged to do so, under the direction of the resident coordinator, in accordance with their development plans and priorities; the note would provide a common framework for action by the United Nations development system as a whole.

Funds and programmes should stress South-South cooperation in their operational activities. The donor countries should be invited to contribute to the Trust Fund established for South-South cooperation.

His country endorsed the recommendations on capacity building contained in the Secretary-General's report. It was for the resident coordinator, together with members of the country team, to provide technical assistance to

programme countries with a view to strengthening national capacities in the fields of policy and programme formulation, development management, planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and review.

Mr. NEBYENZIA (Russian Federation) said it was gratifying to see the steps taken by the various United Nations funds and programmes to implement General Assembly resolution 50/120. Capacity building brought about socio-economic progress by improving governance. His delegation favoured an increase in coordination in the field, especially through the strengthening of the resident coordinator system. It also supported the measures taken to follow up the major international conferences and to harmonize the programming cycles and administrative rules and procedures, and it welcomed the reforms made by UNDP.

If the Russian Federation were a member of the WFP Board, it would be able to increase its cooperation with United Nations funds and programmes more easily. In that connection, it drew attention to the fact that the 1998 review of the Board's membership was expected to raise the membership of the Eastern European Group from two to four members.

Mrs. KIZILDELI (Turkey) said that the Secretariat's analyses of the question under review provided a sound basis for discussion. Although her delegation welcomed the changes in development activities, ranging from technical assistance to capacity building, the transition could be a difficult one and it would require time and determination. In particular, both United Nations bodies and recipient countries must understand the theory behind the new approach. The transition should be carried out with care, in accordance with absorption capacities and the situations of recipient countries.

As prospects for funding activities were not very encouraging, Turkey supported the idea of seeking contributions from non-governmental sources. But the success of those efforts would depend on the system's capacity to provide "marketable products" attractive to those new partners. It was essential to publicize United Nations development efforts more widely. Sound guidelines and monitoring mechanisms must also be established, in order to preserve the neutrality and non-profit-making nature of the United Nations. Lastly, each Executive Board should have sole responsibility for decisions concerning the programmes and funds' tendering mechanisms.

With regard to coordination, her delegation noted that host countries could help to ensure that the resident coordinator system and other coordination mechanisms functioned smoothly by encouraging United Nations representatives to participate in the system. In addition, United Nations bodies should engage in more structured cooperation on the basis of a more precise demarcation of tasks between them and regional and subregional economic groups, which would reduce duplication of work, ensure better use of resources and foster South-South cooperation.

Mr. MOON HA YONG (Republic of Korea) said that capacity building was an important concept in the context of growing globalization and he endorsed recommendations 1 and 2 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/65/Add.3). He also believed that existing policies and procedures should be re-examined and that capacity building could help strengthen South-South cooperation. The Republic of Korea, for its part, had established an international cooperation agency and an economic development cooperation fund.

His delegation supported the strengthening of the resident coordinator system and stressed that resident coordinators should be recruited on as wide a basis as possible. It was also in favour of full implementation of the country strategy note system and of stepping up efforts to achieve common premises. The experiments with the use of regional strategy notes were very interesting and he hoped that the Council would be informed of the results at the next substantive session. Lastly, his delegation wished to see the trend towards a decline in official development assistance encouraged, and it was in favour of seeking additional resources and expanding the core resource funding base.

Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that the review of operational activities was taking place before the presentation of the Track II reforms, which did nothing to facilitate the discussion. His delegation generally endorsed the remarks made by the representatives of Luxembourg, Canada and Norway. The focus was on capacity building, but progress in development cooperation was relatively modest. He therefore attached great importance to the evaluation of the impact of operational activities undertaken by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Development. It would also be useful for the results of the experiment with a

common development assistance framework in Ghana to be written up in order that other interested countries might learn from them. In many cases the preparation of country strategy notes had been a laborious and bureaucratic exercise, for which reason it was preferable to use existing instruments correctly rather than waste time trying to develop perfect instruments.

It was essential for United Nations action at the country level to encompass all the activities of the system, in other words, those of the specialized agencies as well. To strengthen cooperation between the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, a close link should also be established between the system's standard-setting and operational activities. His delegation also encouraged the funds and programmes to pursue and strengthen their regional and subregional activities. As to resources, while it agreed on the need to seek new forms of funding, it believed that the funds and programmes must show that they were indispensable if they wished to convince decision makers to maintain and, if possible, increase their contributions to their core resources.

Mr. SOMOL (Czech Republic) said that operational activities for development should remain at the centre of United Nations activities in the economic and social field. He endorsed the idea that the mission of development assistance was to help countries and societies to strengthen their economic, human, social and institutional capacities for self-sustaining development. Good governance in both the public and private spheres constituted the basis for the "internalization" of the new opportunities offered by globalization and helped to contain the risks associated with it. His delegation subscribed to the statements of other countries calling for diversification of financial resources, including private ones, and for greater transparency in development assistance, whose positive impact should be given more publicity. Harmonization and simplification of rules and procedures must be given due attention not only in operational activities but at all levels of the United Nations structure. Existing rules and regulations were often inconsistent or incompatible with new requirements. There was still much jealousy among the various organs and agencies, which made it difficult to use comparative advantages and accumulated expertise to the full. He therefore looked forward to the Track II reforms to be announced by the Secretary-General on 16 July. National execution was also a very effective

tool for development assistance, in particular for national capacity building. The Council should provide general guidance on national execution. His delegation was in favour of regional and subregional cooperation and enhancement of the role of the regional commissions. The ECE programme of assistance to countries in transition was one good example: it enabled those countries to organize for themselves, with financial and "in-kind" participation by developed countries, useful seminars, workshops and study-tours to help them integrate their national economies into the European and the world economy.

Mrs. AQUILINA (Observer for Malta) expressed appreciation for the excellent documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the item under review. Referring to field- and regional-level cooperation (E/1997/65/Add.2), she pointed out the major role being played by the regional commissions through their collaborative arrangements with such agencies as UNDP and other bilateral donors, and said it was gratifying to hear that the Secretary-General would be taking the role of the regional commissions into account in his reform proposals. Her country had been closely involved in the reform process undertaken by the Economic Commission for Europe.

In the matter of capacity building, her delegation agreed with the five recommendations contained in the third addendum to the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/65/Add.3). In particular, external assistance should be far more selective and sensitive and should not focus on short-term results and narrow accountability. Governments themselves should be responsible for the execution and management of technical cooperation projects. She also agreed that there was a need to establish system-wide guidelines and criteria and a need for a critical review of existing policies and procedures to make capacity building a more focused mission of the United Nations development system. In addition, it was indispensable for United Nations field staff to be supported with more resources and empowered to do the job.

On the question of resources, although her delegation basically agreed with the position of the Group of 77 that FDI and ODA were not interchangeable, it also thought that those two types of support were not completely independent of each other. All resources coming into developing countries, whatever their nature or source, needed to be coordinated if they were to make the greatest possible impact. As the high hopes recently raised

by the "peace dividend" and by the targets agreed in the international conferences had been disappointed, there was a need to go back to basics and focus more on the agencies and institutions whose specialization was in the area of capital and investments.

Mr. DLAMINI (Observer for Swaziland) said that the operational activities system should be maintained in the interest of all developing countries. As far as society at large was concerned, his country was planning to establish a system for participation by traditional institutions in the economic field, and in that regard thanked UNDP for its technical and financial assistance. The traditional chiefs, together with the representatives of the private sector, were holding meetings on the country strategy note. He welcomed the coordination work being carried out by UNICEF in his country with a view to helping traditional institutions participate effectively in its programmes. Also in connection with UNICEF, his delegation would like to see a mechanism developed rapidly for drawing the attention of States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to violations of the rights of children in their territories as the result of armed conflicts or civil wars.

Mr. GRAISSE (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that WFP had instructed its country directors to step up their efforts to further the resident coordinator system. WFP had only recently embarked on the preparation of country programmes. The first had been approved by the Board in October 1996, and three more had been approved since then. In each case, the country programme was based on the country strategy note, and WFP activities were supportive of and supported by those of other funds. Efforts to prepare a common development assistance framework and common assessments would enhance the effectiveness of the system.

WFP's resources had not varied greatly in the past five years. Regrettably, the ratio of resources available for emergencies and protracted relief operations to resources available for development activities had changed dramatically. The slow growth of resources for development was a matter of concern, and WFP had had to focus its development activities on a smaller number of recipient countries, essentially LDCs and low income food deficit countries. Like other funds and programmes, WFP was concerned at the

increasing "de-multilateralization" of resources. Donors were increasingly providing directed multilateral contributions. He hoped it would be possible to reverse that trend.

The WFP Executive Board recommended that the Economic and Social Council should approve the proposed target for contributions, which was 2.1 million tons, or $1 billion, for the 1999-2000 biennium. It also recommended that the Council should endorse the prcposed WFP General Regulations, contained in document E/1997/49, and recommend their approval to the General Assembly. If approved by both the General Assembly and the FAO Conference, the proposed General Regulations would enter into force on 1 January 1998.

Mr. SFEIR-YOUNIS (World Bank) said that a recent report put out by the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department, covering a wide range of countries and projects, indicated that, while technical assistance was central to success in development, it was difficult to achieve. Policy change, capacity building and institutional development were intrinsically complex, and many of the countries most in need of technical assistance were those least equipped to use it effectively. The World Bank was a major provider of technical assistance: loans financing technical assistance amounted to 10 per cent of the Bank's lending.

With regard to outcomes, the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of technical assistance had not been fully satisfactory. Projects with a substantial institutional development impact were the ones judged to have had satisfactory overall performance and also those judged likely to sustain their benefits. Like many other assistance agencies, the World Bank had been prompted to re-examine its approaches to technical assistance. It had endorsed the OECD Development Assistance Committee's Principles for New Orientation in Technical Cooperation.

A few lessons had been learned from experience. There were no standard formulas for making technical assistance effective; governance conditions and civil sector reforms, as well as strong ownership, were central to technical assistance success; institutional development programmes should be designed within context strategies appropriate to the country's political, social and cultural circumstances; attention must be paid to listening to the stakeholders, piloting projects on different scales and using dissemination programmes to demonstrate results within the existing institutional framework; good quality management from both the recipient and the donors was essential

to success; and lastly, ownership should be ensured through participation. The World Bank had tried to apply those lessons in the newly launched Capacity Building Initiative for Africa.

Mr. NAMAKANDO (Zambia) said that a number of countries might be joining the traditional donors and he welcomed the establishment by the Republic of Korea of a development assistance agency. Zambia was in favour of a gradual transition from traditional technical assistance to capacity building. Non-core resources should not be increased at the expense of the multilateral nature of assistance. Increasing core resources was a matter of political will.

The resident coordinator system should be strengthened. High priority should be given to harmonizing and simplifying rules and procedures. National execution should be encouraged, provided that the projects carried out by national institutions continued to enjoy the same level of support. The specialized agencies should, however, be able to contribute their skills to national programmes and projects through an appropriate mechanism. It was too soon to implement the concept of the regional strategy note, as some countries did not yet have a country strategy note. Lastly, Zambia looked forward to the Track II reforms to be announced by the Secretary-General.

Mr. MIKHNEVICH (Belarus) reaffirmed his delegation's position that United Nations system operational activities should aim at strengthening international development cooperation, making the United Nations system a driving force for sustainable development and concentrating existing resources on the key areas of development. His delegation endorsed efforts to strengthen inter-agency coordination in the field and at the regional level. The role of the United Nations in the field should basically be to help Governments design a national development policy and increase their margin for manoeuvre within the framework of international rules and obligations. All funds, programmes and specialized agencies should be represented in a country by a single office, and programmes should be designed and financed on a concerted basis. Offices could be grouped gradually, following an assessment and consultations on the adoption of planning and administrative procedures. The funds and programmes should nonetheless preserve their individual features, even if a more precise distribution of tasks was necessary.

His delegation was in favour of enhancing the role of the resident coordinators, who should have the main responsibility of programme and project implementation. In particular, local offices should be strengthened

administratively and financially, their powers to design, approve and implement projects should be expanded and administrative procedures should be simplified and the level of responsibility raised. To that end, field representatives' access to the centrally-managed funds must be made easier.

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Chief, Operational Activities for Development Unit) replied to questions and comments at the invitation of the President. The preparation of the report, in particular the recommendations, had been subject to a constraint, namely the general policy framework established by General Assembly resolution 50/120 in 1995, which was why some recommendations were perhaps not very precise. With reference to a question by the European Union, the common country assessments and the common development assistance framework were still at the experimental stage. In the light of the lessons learned from experiments such as the one in Ghana mentioned earlier, guidelines would be prepared in the course of the year. It was his understanding that it would not entail direct costs - simply an extra workload which would have to be carried out within the normal budgetary allocations. The goal of all the initiatives mentioned - common databases, common country assessments, common development assistance framework and country strategy notes - was to achieve better integration between United Nations system assistance and the various national programmes.

With regard to capacity building, he assured the representative of China that the Secretariat's work was completely unbiased and took account of the international economic context. The Secretary-General's report (E/1997/65/Add.3) was simply a summary of a much more comprehensive work. The Secretariat had begun an evaluation of the impact of operational activities that focused basically on capacity strengthening; it was supported by a number of countries but would welcome support from even more. Replying to the representative of the United States, he acknowledged the need to prepare a body of knowledge on that subject. The Secretariat was in close contact with the World Bank and the other United Nations system agencies with a view to learning from their experience.

As to the resident coordinator system, the Secretariat was preparing guidelines on job descriptions, assessment of results and various aspects described in detail in the Secretary-General's report concerning field- and regional-level coordination (E/1997/65/Add.2). In the matter of common premises, the representative of Norway had raised the question of costs. The

benefits expected from common premises and services went far beyond cost economies, and would lead to gains in terms of synergy and teamwork, which were factors that were difficult to analyse from a cost-benefit point of view.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (agenda item 1) (continued) (E/1997/80)

Accreditation of an intergovernmental organization

The PRESIDENT said that the Bureau had examined a request for accreditation submitted by an intergovernmental organization, the International Centre for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, and recommended that, in conformity with rule 79 of the rules of procedure, it should be admitted to participate regularly, without a vote, in Council discussions on issues relating to its field of activity.

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council approved the accreditation of the International Centre for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering.

It was so decided.

Requests for hearings from non-governmental organizations

The PRESIDENT drew the Council's attention to the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/1997/80). The Committee had met on 12 June 1997 and decided to recommend that the following non-governmental organizations should be heard under the relevant agenda items: four organizations in general consultative status, the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations and the World Muslim Congress, and one organization in special consultative status, the International Association for Volunteer Effort. If he heard no objection, he would take it that those five non-governmental organizations were authorized to speak under the agenda items listed in document E/1997/80.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.